

A STUDY OF ONE SEASON'S IMPACT ON TEAM COHESION

FIELD PROJECT

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By

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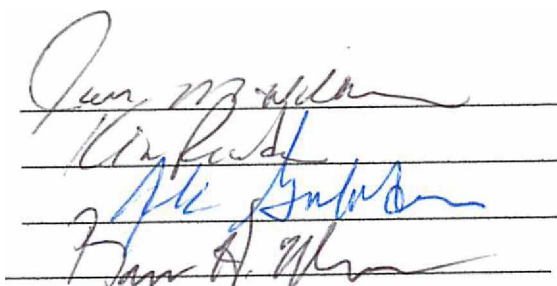
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Fly: "When a great adventure is offered, you don't refuse it."

-Amelia Earhart

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	2
Significance of the Study.....	3
Setting.....	4
Assumptions.....	4
Limitations.....	4
Definitions.....	5
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
Role of the Coach.....	8
Interpersonal Relationships Among Athletes.....	14
Belief in Team Success.....	18
Summary.....	20
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	22
Setting and Participants.....	22
Research Procedure.....	23
Data Gathering.....	25
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	27
Results.....	27

Observations.....	28
Athlete Survey.....	29
Athlete Extended Response.....	31
Interview with Coach.....	37
Discussion.....	40
Summary.....	41
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.....	45
Educational Implications.....	45
Recommendations for Future Research.....	47
Conclusion.....	48
APPENDICES.....	49
A. CONSENT FORM.....	49
B. STUDENT ATHLETE EXTENDED RESPONSE.....	51
C. INTERVIEW WITH COACH.....	54
REFERENCES.....	55

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

There have been multiple studies on the importance of team cohesion and the effect it has on successful results and outcomes. Within studies, factors such as trust, faith, common understanding of expectations, ability to see mistakes as part of success and willingness to take personal risks are all traits of the process called “collective efficacy.” One such study presented by Feltz, Myers, and Payment (2004) studied the relationships between collective efficacy and team performance in women's ice hockey. When collective efficacy is formed within a team, resiliency emerges, leading to a higher likelihood of the achievement of desired outcome(s). Graydon, Greenless, and Maynard (2000) designed a study analyzing relationships between performance and collective efficacy. Existing research has studied how collective efficacy is formed and maintained in sports team environments over segments of seasons.

While studies have been beneficial in understanding team cohesion in sport, all evaluated small segments of seasons, including one-time interviews, and questionnaires. It may be equally important to understand what happens over the course of the entire season regarding collective efficacy. When a small period of time is studied, the team could be at a high or low point in the season, thus affecting the results. This study will assess a team's competitive season from start to finish, including all the natural moments of success and failure, thus expanding current research and delving into the question of how collective efficacy is formed in a successful program over the course of an entire season.

Statement of the Problem

Studies have been conducted on the power of collective efficacy as it relates to positive outcomes; however, these studies have not focused upon the coaching style and how that style affects the athletes and the development of efficacy over the course of a season. Other factors contributing to the development of team cohesion may be dependent upon, age, skill, commitment to fitness, and individual priorities of individual team members, as well as histories of previous success, and confidence. For example, when a program has history of proven success on the field, does the athletes' mentality change? Or, if a program has a history of losing, do athletes treat losing as the norm? This study aims to gain insight on factors that contribute to collective efficacy, cohesion, mentality, and ultimately success.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the following: the particular coaching style of the New England College Field Hockey Coach, practice plans, interpersonal relationships among team members, self-efficacy, and the influence of historical success of a program. The primary focus of this study is to identify how these different factors, taken collectively, may have affected the collective team's success.

It is important to consider how different variables of self-efficacy affected the overall collective team efficacy (Stegelin, 2003). Self-efficacy is defined by Albert Bandura as, "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of

action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 19). If an athlete lack self-confidence, it is unlikely they feel the required confidence for collective efficacy. In order to achieve self-efficacy, the athlete must experience assurance on their ability to perform (Cox, 2002). The relationship between coach and athlete may or may not affect the athlete’s ability to perform at her best. All players develop confidence in their ability differently. They may have success on the field or they may have received positive feedback from parents, coaches, or teammates.

It is commonly understood that coaches have significant impact on a team’s overall success. This study will examine specific coaching behavior and attitudes that contribute to team cohesion. There is no question that a coach’s relationship to individual athletes and the overall team play a role in the development of team cohesion. In Jeff Janssen’s *Seven Secrets to Successful Coaches* (2002) he states, “Whether you realize it or not, your credibility has an impact on every aspect of your program- that’s why it is so important. Becoming a more credible coach is the key to unlocking and unleashing your team’s potential” (p. 23). When athletes trust and believe in their leader they are more likely to be motivated, committed, and have confidence in their ability to succeed.

Significance of this Study

This research was designed to extend existing knowledge in the area of collective team efficacy. A season-long study consisting of extensive observation, question and answer, and a survey will create understanding of significant variables affecting collective efficacy. Acting as an outside observer of the multiple operations and day-to-day interactions of a team atmosphere, the researcher-as-participant

provided qualitative understanding of the development of team cohesion with a successful program to complement other measures.

Setting

The 2008 New England College Field Hockey team was studied on the New England College campus during their home contests. Surveys were administered three days prior to the league championship game, after practice.

Assumptions

As a current collegiate coach and former athlete, this researcher has had first-hand experience with team sports from different perspectives, *i.e.*, coach and athlete. From this experience, the researcher assumes that coaching, in all of its various forms, *e.g.*, sport-specific competence, energy level, attitudes related to winning and losing, *etc.*, is central to a team's success. Because of the researcher's experience as athlete and coach, it became intriguing to her to pursue existing knowledge of how teams function; more in particular, how successful teams are formed.

Limitations

Interestingly, the survey and interview questions with the athletes were completed three days prior to their conference championship game. Future research might focus on the athletes' answers, and whether they would have changed as the result of a post-championship win. While this study covered the team's perception of their cohesiveness, one must not assume this is not the only way to achieve collective efficacy. The New England College field hockey program is unique due to a continued level of success it has shown over the past ten years. Based on the study of one season, the reader should be cautious of making broad interpretations and

generalizations from the results, though some observed patterns may be useful for future study.

Definitions

Coach-athlete compatibility: The quality of the relationship between the coach and the athlete (Cox, 2002).

Collective efficacy: defined as the group's shared beliefs in its capacities to organize and execute actions to produce a desired goal (Bandura, 1997).

Conceptual model of team cohesion: A model of team cohesion that is based on an interaction between an athlete's group orientation and the athlete's perception of the team (Cox, 2002).

Cohesion: defined as the bonding together of members of an organization/unit in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other, their unit, and the mission (Henderson, 1985).

Expectations of Collegiate Field Hockey Coach: This is a full-time position. The New England College women's field hockey coach assumes responsibility for all areas relating to the team. Specific responsibilities include managing all aspects of team preparation for a successful and competitive program at NCAA Division III level (pre-season, in-season and off-season) and effectively recruiting qualified student-athletes who will be excellent representatives of New England College. The head coach is also expected to develop and maintain alumni and family support of the program, develop fundraising strategies, and maintain an accurate budget based on equipment, facility, travel needs, prepare a competitive schedule, and coordinate community service activities for the team (www.ncaa.com. retrieved May 11, 2008).

Expectations of NCAA athlete: Each athlete is expected to maintain a 2.0 grade point average or higher and keep a full-time status in order to remain eligible to compete in competition. Failure to do so eliminates the individual from competition.

(www.ncaa.com. retrieved May 11, 2008).

Field hockey: A game that consists of two teams in which each player has a stick, and the game is played with a solid plastic ball (played on the ground) that is a bit bigger than a tennis ball. The goal is for the team to get the ball into the net (one net is located at the each end of the field). The players in the field may only play the ball with the face of the stick, *i.e.*, the flat side of the stick. “Game time is divided into two equal halves of 35 minutes each, with a five-minute break for half-time. At the start of each half, as well as after goals are scored, play is started with a pass from the center of the field. All players must start in their defensive half, but the ball may be played in any direction along the field. Each team starts with the ball in one half and the team that conceded the goal has possession for the restart” (NCAA.com, retrieved April 26th, 2009).

Group Environment Questionnaire: A team cohesion measurement instrument designed to measure four dimensions of team cohesion (Cox, 2002).

Relationship Motivation: Concern with interpersonal relationships between leader and followers (Cox, 2002).

Self-efficacy: Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments.

Social Cohesion: The degree to which the members of a team like each other and enjoy personal satisfaction from being members of the team (Cox, 2002).

Team Building: A process used to promote an increased sense of unity and cohesiveness and to enable a team to function together more smoothly and effectively (Cox, 2002).

Team Cohesion: A dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for a group or team to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of goals and objectives (Cox, 2002).

TCCC: The Commonwealth Coast Conference. This is the conference that New England College plays in and the team has won the past eight of nine conference championships.

Summary

To better understand team cohesion, it is important to consider the following components: coach-athlete relationship, player to player relationship, self-efficacy and historical success of a program. These different variables, taken together, determine the level of efficacy a team may display. The following chapters will elaborate and provide detail relative to these stated components.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

When studying collective efficacy, it is important to understand all levels of meaning of the word “team” and their impact on cohesion. A team does not just consist of players; instead, it includes all those individuals associated in the day-to-day operations of the program. Obvious to all observers is that a successful team has to be a cohesive team, one that displays positive personal and interpersonal energy.

There were three predominant themes in the literature reviewed which emerged regarding team cohesion. This chapter will discuss different aspects of the role of the coach in developing team cohesion. Next, interpersonal relationships among athletes will be discussed. Finally, the importance of individual beliefs in team success will be addressed. This chapter will address these three themes, and then will describe how they all play a role in developing collective efficacy and summarize current thinking in the field regarding team cohesion.

Role of Coach

A common assumption among outside observers is that a team will be successful if it is cohesive. However, perhaps less obvious is the relationship among and between the coaching staff members and the impact of those relationships on the health and success of the team they lead (Martin, 2002). A Coaching Staff Scale was developed, and 484 coaches in nine sports were studied by Martin, resulting in findings revealing if the team perceives the coaching staff as having common goals, common interests, and healthful interactions, the potential for dysfunction within the

team itself is significantly reduced. As Martin observes, "Although coaching staff cohesion may not directly impact success, the trickledown effect is likely" (Martin, 2002, p. 40).

Many athletes carefully observe how their coach behaves, communicates, and interacts in everyday situations. Ray Nitschke, a former Green Bay Packer player coached by Vince Lombardi, states, "If the coach is organized, everything falls into place. If he has self-discipline, then the team has discipline. If he's dedicated, the team is dedicated. Everything revolves around the head coach. He's the one who has to make the team go" (Janssen, 2002, p. 2). While head coaches do not behave or speak for players, they are very influential on individual and team behavior, resulting in how the team operates. Regardless of the type of leadership a coach displays or the behavior of team, the impact of the coach on team cohesion is critical to future success. Coaching today's athlete goes beyond the simple "X's and O's." It is proven coaches play a large role in creating more confident, committed, and coachable athletes (Janssen, 2002, p. 7). Beyond knowledge of the game, a coach's job includes the responsibility to relate and motivate athletes. Former UCLA Men's Basketball Coach John Wooden (1997) in *Wooden* observes:

There is very little difference in technical knowledge about the game of basketball among most experienced coaches. However, there is a vast difference between leaders in their ability to teach and motivate those under their supervision. You must have the more elusive ability to teach and to motivate. This defines a leader; if you can't teach and you can't motivate, you can't lead. (p. 122)

Teaching the strategy of the game is certainly a large part of building successful teams; however, more importantly, it is how the tactic of the game is communicated based on Wooden's experience. The most difficult part of coaching is motivating the

athletes to perform under pressure. Conventional wisdom dictates that replication of a task under genuine simulated conditions is the best way to achieve desired results. Janssen (2002) suggests, “Credible coaches are confidence builders; they see the potential in each of their athletes and help them realize it” (p. 138). In order to maintain inspiration under true game conditions, one needs the confidence and motivation to execute the learned skill.

While motivation continues to play a critical role in building a confident and successful team atmosphere, the behavior of the coach determines the way in which inspiration is received by the team. A coach who demonstrates behavior in a more democratic environment, and is willing to distribute the perception of power with players and assistant coaches increases intrinsic motivation of the team to perform (Cox, 2002, p. 73). Bill Walton, a Basketball Hall of Fame inductee, explains the difference between a controlling-type coach and a democratic-type coach stating:

Wooden fostered hope. Knight represents the death of hope, the stifling control freak. Look at his coaching style: “Get the ball, and look over here at me, and I’ll tell you what to do. I’ll put you in a position where you can win by one or two points because it’s my strategy in the end.” Wooden gave you the freedom to perform. He was the conductor of a free-form symphony. He always said, “Don’t look over here at the sideline. I’ve already done my job. When the game starts, it’s about you guys having fun playing a game and doing your best.” (Cox, 2002, p. 74)

Coaches take many different approaches when trying to motivate and coach their athletes. In order to gain respect from athletes, coaches need to respect and trust their players. Some players might be motivated out of fear; however, the more sustainable approach to motivation is a coach who behaves optimistically rather than one who leads by frightening players.

Motivating a team to perform plays an important role, yet the relationship between individual athletes and their coach also affect the success of how inspiration is communicated and heard. “Compatibility between coach and athlete has been shown to be an important determinant of team success and satisfaction” (Cox, 2002, p. 358). The relationship between coach and athlete plays a critical role in team cohesion. When a coach and athlete have a positive relationship, the following components are displayed: mutual respect, an understanding of each other’s roles, and an aspiration to communicate honest feelings (Cox, 2002, p. 358). When the above positive interaction framework occurs between coach and player, it translates to improved performance on the field for the athlete. Cox states that, “quality interaction, communication, and respect between coach and athlete lead to athlete satisfaction and improved performance” (p. 359). When a coach and player have gained mutual respect they can effectively maintain their relationship by being open and direct with each other. In Janssen’s (2002) coaching model, he reminds coaches “It takes a conscious effort on your part to put them at ease and allow them to trust that they can speak with you when needed” (p. 167). The open door process builds trust between both coach and athlete, thus allowing the preservation of a healthy relationship.

After a coach and athlete have acquired a healthy relationship, the literature suggests that coaching and learning can take place. An ingredient of coaching is correcting mistakes during practices and games. How coaches correct mistakes on the field is critical in order to balance coaching direction while maintaining athletes’ self-esteem and ability to make split-second decisions on the field. T.W. Miller

developed a model for assertiveness training. According to Miller's assertiveness training model, instruction between coach and athlete takes place in three steps (using a volleyball example):

1. Describe the situation to the athlete. Example: Your assignment was to cover the power angle of that spike.
2. Tell how it affects the team. Example: When you follow through with your assignment, it provides the coverage necessary for an effective defense.
3. Tell what you think should be done. Example: Focus your attention on your specific assignment and trust your teammates to take care of their assignments. (Cox, 2002, p. 360)

Finding a healthy way to critique and teach players plays a vital role in maintaining the bond between coach and athlete.

Maintaining relationships with players is important; however, continuing to communicate effectively with players is an ability that not all coaches have mastered. The University of Louisville men's basketball coach Rick Patino (2000) in *Lead to Succeed*, argues that, "So much of good leadership rests on your ability to get your message across. The ability to communicate effectively is one of your best weapons" (p. 26). Part of coaching includes interacting with players on a daily basis, both on and off the court. The way in which you deal with these interactions can determine the long-term success of a season and of the overall program (Janssen, 2002, p. 165). The qualities of communication important for a coach to keep in mind include the following: open and direct communication, taking a proactive approach, nonverbal interaction, communication before, during, and after competition, listening, and valuing the athlete's input (Janssen, 2002, p. 166). When resolving conflicts and

initiating communication Mike Krzyzewski (2000) from Duke University in *Leading with the Heart*, articulates that,

People talk to you in different ways- through facial expressions, moods, mannerisms, body language, the tone in their voice, the look in their eyes. As a coach, I must be able to read my players, to recognize those different things, and then take appropriate action. (p. 107)

Managing each situation appropriately becomes a skill a coach must master in order to produce quality communication. Coaching consistency and predictability is critical in successful communication with athletes. Coaches who are consistent have a sound philosophy that includes extraordinary organization and attention to detail (Janssen, 2002, p. 182). One of most successful coaches in the history of sport, Pat Summitt in *Reach for the Summit*, (1998), suggests, “To be credible, you must be consistent. Any sign of inconsistency, and you lose credibility instantly” (p. 104). By sustaining a consistent philosophy a coach develops a standard by which athletes accept, thus creating a successful environment.

A coach who displays a steadiness within their coaching also proves to be a role model for athletes. Coaches who display positive role modeling demonstrate characteristics such as: integrity, ethical standards, truth telling, committed, caring, confidence buildings they conduct themselves in a professional manner, and take pride in representing their teams (Janssen, 2002, p. 34). Sun-Tzu, in *The Art of War* (2002) advocates, “When one treats people with benevolence, justice, and righteousness, and reposes confidence in them, the army will be united in mind and all will be happy to serve their leaders” (p. 65). Athletes will be more inclined to perform for a coach who they believe is working for their best interest.

Positive role modeling provides a fundamental building block for successful teams. Just as important, perhaps, is the concept of cohesion of head coaches and assistant coaches in their work. Teams model the behaviors and level of cohesion demonstrated by coaching staff. Grounding their arguments in social learning theory Bandura, (1977), Brawley (1990) and Martin (2002) suggest “athletic teams model the behaviors and level of cohesion demonstrated by their coaching staff. Therefore, developing unity among a coaching staff may be critical in building cohesion among members of an athletic team" (Blackburn, 1985). It is important coaches build the base in creating positive relationships with their athletes, yet it is just as critical to maintain affirming connections with their peers. This allows the coaching staff to model a team cohesion mentality for their athletes to follow.

Interpersonal Relationships among Athletes

After the coaching staff achieves harmony and sets the tone for collective efficacy for the team, it becomes essential there are ongoing positive interpersonal relationships and interactions among athletes. Heuze, Fontayne, and Raimbault (2006) used two measures of the individuals’ performance: pre- and post-. Employing two measures, they evaluated team dynamics as it impacts team performance and success. The results of the study revealed significantly important relationships between three factors of team cohesion and success: the individual’s motivation to achieve the group’s goal, group function as a whole in competition, and the health of social relationships among team members. In the end, interpersonal relationships among team members are of primary importance, both on and off the court (Heuze, Fontayne, Raimbault, 2006).

Additionally, a study was done by Kozub and McDonnell (2000) that explored the relationship between perceived cohesion and collective efficacy in rugby teams. The authors enlisted ninety-six athletes from seven rugby teams to complete a Group Environment Questionnaire created by Widmeyer, Brawley, and Carron, designed to measure collective efficacy and athletes' perception of their team cohesion. The study reveals that a coach is in a position to have an incredible influence over the collective efficacy of their team (Kozub & McDonnell, 2000). Before the athletes' themselves are able to form a level of collective efficacy, it is critical that the coaching staff model the same positive cohesion.

Lars Tore Ronglan (2007) adds his own personal experience being a member of a world class handball team, and through participant observations of team dynamics. Ronglan supplemented his own personal observations with teammate interviews, once the season was over. He concluded positive team dynamics centered on interpersonal relationships, how team members perceived past performances, interpreted their own team history, and how they collectively prepare for upcoming competitions. Other elements contributed to team efficacy were common competition rituals and the creation of positive energy among team members (Ronglan, 2007).

Personal relations within team dynamics also become particularly important in building successful teams. The dynamics of personal relationships between the captain and starters, as well as non-starting players are an vital factor affecting team performance. Importantly, "The liked and respected leader does not need formal power.. her interpersonal attitudes influence group performance to a significantly greater degree than similar attitudes of a leader who is not accepted by her group"

(Anshel, 1990, p. 165). When team members identify with, and are accepted by their peers, they are more likely to perform better as both individuals and a group.

Team commitment is built when all players are involved in discussing the team mission. When players feel involved in the process, they become more motivated to be committed and have the opportunity for ownership in what they are a part (Janssen, 2002, p. 55). Pat Summitt (1998) suggests, “Responsibility equals accountability equals ownership. And a sense of ownership is the most powerful weapon a team or organization can have” (p. 78). When players are involved in the process of alignment to mission, coaches show the team they respect the goals and dreams of the team. The concept that when something does not belong to you, the less it becomes important similarly holds true in building team cohesion.

Every athlete who is a part of a team needs to feel they belong, and what they do matters. Part of the process in building positive relationships among all team members relies on role identification. Successful teams have players who may not necessarily be all-stars, but they accept their roles, and are willing to put team needs ahead of their own desires (Janssen, 2002, p. 93). The need to aim for the common good holds true as well for the top performers. Importance lies within players who enthusiastically do the tough, ambiguous, and underappreciated jobs. These athletes also take pride in doing the “dirty work.” Pat Williams (1997) in *The Magic of Teamwork* notices, “When everybody carries out his or her assigned role, a team of good, well-balanced, synchronized players can knock off a team of mega talents who are just out to pump up their stats” (p. 68). Often, teams who have athletes who gladly accept the role of doing the work without recognition are teams that end up

proving to be more successful. All players must view the team's success over personal story in order to consistently win.

In order to build a sense of unity among all team members regardless of role, team building becomes a necessary deliberate element of coaching. According to B. Newman (1984), team building “promotes an increased sense of unity and cohesiveness and enables the team to function together more smoothly and effectively” (p. 27). Building healthy relationships among team members is critical to team success. There are numerous methods to build a team. Team building challenges and games permit players to become familiar with the difficulties and rewards of being a winning team (Janssen, 2002, p. 28). Team building can be coached in the form of challenges that are short, simple and do not necessarily require cost. Janssen points out “Some activities focus on having a common goal, others on role playing, communication, problem solving, conflict management, accountability and trust, and many a combination of these skills” (p. 28). The goal of team building activities simulates the trials and tribulations of the season lying ahead for a team and enhances the group's abilities to effectively problem-solve.

Building team cohesion through activities can be enjoyable for athletes and can be seen to have strong transfer, *i.e.* the athletes understand how the off-field experience is relevant to game performance. However, the best way to approach these team-building activities is to engage in experiences which create a lasting impression. A team who takes time to discuss the learned behavior and how the group plans to act on adversity or challenge in the future becomes a team on its way to assembling cohesion (Janssen, 2002, p. 29). The process of discussion is the most

difficult element within these activities. Janssen suggests that, “A skilled facilitator can promote awareness and insights that will give your players a better understanding of successful teams as well as their team in particular” (p. 29).

The purposes of team building activities are based in hope to enhance player loyalty to both teammates and coaches while gaining support among teammates. Following the building process the team becomes, “an energetic group of people who are committed to achieving common activities, who work well together and enjoy doing so, and who produce high quality results” (Anshel, 1990, p. 288). Team building is interactive- each experience done well enhances the next.

Certain stages occur during the development of building team cohesion. Theorists have referred to four stages that occur during the building process: forming, storming, norming, and performing (Anshel, 1990, p.289). The first stage of forming is a process which allows group members to learn about each other. Next, the team goes through a storming phase, where athletes battle for control, for rank, and for the attention of the coaching staff. Third, the athletes go through a norming stage in which, “the group comes together, resistance or going your own way is overcome, and cooperation among group members is improved” (Anshel, 1990, p. 290). The last component of building a team is the coming together process where the group is able to direct its focus on common good and goal achievement.

Belief in Team Success

Factors other than individual skill, coaching ability, and team belief in success play into team cohesion. When a team becomes cohesive, each individual athlete

shows their desire to achieve the desired goal. Michael Jordan relates his experience to the team idea:

Naturally there are going to be some ups and downs, particularly if you have individuals trying to achieve at a high level. But, when we stepped in between the lines, we knew what we were capable of doing. When a pressure situation presented itself, we were plugged into one another as a cohesive unit. (Cox, 2002, p. 329)

Self-belief can affect the following components for an athlete: encouragement level, concentration, decision making, expended effort, and the determination required to overcome certain difficulties (Smith, 1999, p. 87). The athlete will gain self-confidence through trust and experience. Acquiring self-confidence begins the process of building a team trust and confidence in the group's ability.

Team confidence reflects the athlete's judgment on the capability of the team and on the effort each individual will put in to be successful. Sandra E. Short and Philip J Sullivan (2003) observe:

Team confidence exists on both an individual level (a person's judgment of his or her team's confidence) and on a team level (the combined team members' judgments of the team's capabilities). Consider the following example: Kaiden is a member of a hockey team. He is extremely self-confident in his ability to make the correct play during a game. However, because his teammates are not as skilled as he is, Kaiden does not possess (on an individual level) a high level of confidence in his team. Kaiden's teammates draw the same conclusions, and as a result the combined judgment (team level) of the team's capabilities is also low. (p. 1)

Sullivan's example of the ice hockey player provides an instance where the individual player did not believe in the capabilities of his teammate. In this case, the athlete felt the only way for the team to be successful was if he, alone, proved to be successful during competition.

Team confidence focuses on the ability of the team. The importance of each player to build and maintain self-confidence plays a role in team confidence; however Short and Sullivan make a distinction between the two, “Therefore, while self-confidence reflects on individual’s judgment or perception of his or her own capabilities and effort, team confidence reflects a team member’s judgment of his or her team’s capabilities and effort” (p. 14). Individual success remains important; yet, belief in team during competition and pressure situations is critical.

Often, teams will face adversity during the course of the season. Belief in self and in the group allows athletes to rise above through hardship, and continue to reach for desired achievement. Rimm, in a reflection on traits of successful women, stated, “Resiliency, or the ability to recover from misfortune was an absolutely necessary ingredient in the success of these women, but creativity and flexibility played a part in that resiliency, along with perseverance” (1999, p.299). Success of a team often requires being persistent over a long period of time.

Success appears in different forms for different teams. An important aspect in creating success within teams is defining what success means to the group. John Wooden defines success as, “a peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best you are capable of becoming” (Wooden, p. 32). A component in team success is trusting teammates are doing everything they can for the good of the group.

Summary

Overall, there are many factors playing into the overall collective efficacy of a team. Among them are: the unity of coaching staff, positive interpersonal

relationships and individual belief in team success. Team cohesion is dependent upon a team's collective ability to pursue a common goal, and on communication. Finally, effective communication plays a critical role in developing team cohesion. The University of Connecticut men's basketball coach Jim Calhoun states, "good communication is the way that you build bonds with people, and when bonds are established, motivating people is a lot easier" (p. 104). Open, honest, and positive communication between all members involved in team interaction helps establish collective efficacy. When cohesion is established, trust, motivation, and desire to succeed, significantly increase.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to identify the components that go into creating and sustaining team cohesion of the New England College field hockey program. This project examined elements involved in the development of team efficacy, *e.g.*, individual athlete attitudes, team relationship dynamics, head coach behaviors and attitudes. This chapter will describe the setting and participants studied, the development of the survey, and will conclude with a description of the process used to gather and analyze the data.

Setting and Participants

Participants in this study included 17 collegiate female field hockey players attending New England College and two female coaches. Located in Henniker, N.H., New England College is a Division III institution, and it is a member of the nine-team Commonwealth Coast Conference. All of the athletes are from the northeastern region of the country and all classes (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior) were represented in the study. The players' ranged from 18-22 years ($M=18.6$). Racial demographics of the team included 16 Caucasians and 1 player of African-American descent. Years of field hockey experience varied greatly among players, ranging from 8 years to less than 3 years of competitive experience. Many players had fulfilled central roles on their respective high-school teams (*e.g.*, Most Valuable Player, Team Captain, Best Defense, and Desire Award) and had earned recognition for exceptional play (*e.g.*, Tournament MVP's, All League and All-State Honors).

No athlete received athletic funding for their participation and thus none was considered a “scholarship athlete.”

Research Procedure

For the purpose of this fieldwork project, the researcher used individual surveys and interviews as the primary sources of data. These methods were guided by the work of Janssen (1999) and Cox (2002). In addition, other forms of information were included, including media artifacts, game statistics, and observational data.

The New England College field hockey program head coach was contacted prior to the study and her permission was granted to observe and interview individual players for this project. All participants received information regarding the background information of this study, the procedures to be used, and issues of confidentiality prior to the start of the question and answer process. Finally, all participants received information about their rights as research participants and informed consent procedures were followed throughout the entire investigation (Appendix A). These steps were taken in order to ensure reliability of data sources, including maintaining the anonymity of members’ interview responses.

This qualitative study was grounded in Bandura’s (1997) theories of collective efficacy that posit the effects of a group’s shared beliefs in its capacities to organize and execute actions to produce a desired goal. The researcher was present for every home game in order to observe interaction among team members during each contest.

It is important to note the researcher also relied upon Jeff Janssen’s theoretical model of “Championship Team Building” (1999) throughout in her research.

Important concepts such as clarifying and accepting roles, goal setting, commitment, conflict, and communication were of primary importance in generating this project's surveys and questions to determining team efficacy. As Janssen points out, "There is misguided assumption about championship teams getting along 24 hours a day, seven days a week... with a variety of different attitudes, backgrounds and preferences, players are not always going to love each other" (p. 135). Common goal identification within the group takes precedence to friendships off the field in order to achieve team success.

In order to maintain participant anonymity, the researcher had the team answer the surveys and extended response questions anonymously. Each athlete answered 17 survey questions on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 being low, 10 being high) followed by 19 open-ended interview questions (Appendix B). The individual player extended response questions were developed using existing collective efficacy research. Questions involving player's confidence and preparation levels, belief in teammates and coaches, and commitment to the team were administered toward the end of the competitive season, following a practice session. It took the participants between 10 to 40 minutes to complete the survey and extended responses. Following the completion of the survey and extended response questions they put their answers in a sealed envelope. These individual player interviews and surveys allowed for comparison between and among player responses within the same time context.

The head coach was interviewed on a separate occasion following the completion of the season. The importance of her role in developing team unity was critical for the use of this study. The participation of the head coach involved an

open-ended interview session that lasted approximately 90 minutes (Appendix C). The head coach granted the researcher permission to video record the interview and took place in the researcher's office at New England College. The video-record allowed the researcher to review segments of the interview in greater depth in order to ensure accurate interpretation of answers. The head coach answered questions related to team obstacles, leadership of captains, and group efficacy.

Data Gathering

Prior to the start of the season, the researcher initiated her research by gathering history on the New England College field hockey program. In order to learn more, the researcher accessed team records through the sports information department at New England College. This process allowed the researcher to develop a starting point to explore the development of team cohesion for the 2008 season.

A Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) was developed by Brawley, Carron, and Widmeyer (1987) to assess cohesion and involves two aspects (Carron, 2004, p. 468) of group efficacy. First, group integration is measured showing the significance of the individual's perceptions about the unity and bonding within the team as a whole. The second aspect of this questionnaire relates to the individual's desire to be a part of the team. Within these two components of team concept, both the task and social elements are evaluated. This approach to linking cohesion and performance allowed the researcher to develop a similar survey directing questions at the significance of efficacy on an individual level and group level. Thus, the gathering of survey data allowed the researcher to make a distinction between cohesion and performance.

Assembling the information involved three steps. The first step was the collection of survey's and extended responses from the players. After the player responses were collected, the researcher matched up each question and responses by typing 17 responses taken collectively under each question in order to gain perception of individual beliefs on the group and individual tasks. Second, the researcher gave a separate interview through email in which the assistant coach was able to type her responses and send them back. The next step involved comparing her responses to the team's responses. Finally, the researcher was able to assemble the responses of the head coach and compare her observations of the season to the group results.

The researcher's previous experiences and present role within a team setting undoubtedly influenced the analysis of interview responses. The influence of the GEQ procedures allowed the researcher's previous beliefs to aid in the development of new theories emerging from the data. In order to interpret information gathered from the surveys and extended responses from the participants, the researcher developed three categories: belief in self and team, commitment to individual and team success, and motivation to succeed. The interpretations of the results formulated a theory concerning the creation and development of team cohesion.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to seek additional information in the development of team cohesion. The importance of elements, process, and success were investigated over the course of an entire season. The researcher observed home contests over the course of an entire season and then asked the athletes to participate in a survey and interview three days prior to their championship game. Appendix B shows the themes that were asked of the athletes' while Appendix C displays the themes produced by the head coach in her interview. Building upon current research, the data gathering and analysis was designed to demonstrate how the various elements of efficacy influenced team cohesion over the course of the season, thus resulting in success. This chapter will include the results with a graph and summaries of the information gathered followed by a discussion on the interpretation of the outcome.

Results

Prior to the interview process, the goal for the researcher was to gather background information on previous team success of the New England College field hockey program in order to gain information regarding program history, thus aiding in the development of survey questions. In 1992, the program started with a 3-8-2 record and has now become a power in The Commonwealth Coast Conference with a 20-3 record in 2006 (New England College sports information). Further, the team has been crowned TCCC champions and earned an NCAA tournament berth for the past seven seasons. Although the program had high expectations, they had lost an All-

American to graduation in 2007 who led the team with 80 points, and felt that this would be a rebuilding year for the team. The head coach had recruited eight freshmen to join the 2008 team who were expected to make an immediate impact.

Observations

During the first home contest, the goal of the researcher was to observe communication on the sidelines between players and coaching staff, body language, and cohesion among team members. It is important to note the opposing team showed up to the game 30 minutes beyond the expected start time of the game. This incident caused an animated reaction from the head coach of New England College toward the opposing coach with both teams witnessing the conversation. It is also important to note the opposing coach was male. The New England College athletes all halted their movement and watched their coach in amazement. The games management staff gave the opposing team ten minutes to warm up and start the game.

Following the start of the game, the researcher positioned herself behind the bench in order to have a respectable view of the players and coaching staff. The researcher observed that some team members were sitting on the bench, while others were standing along the sidelines. The head coach was standing twenty feet away from her team toward the defensive end of the field. The players not involved in the play were quiet and reserved. Athletes involved in play on the field, coming to the bench for rest, were greeted by the head coach for instruction. The head coach would stand in front of them telling them both what they needed to do differently and things that they had achieved.

The last home contest of the season was viewed very differently than the first by the researcher. The researcher noted that no team member was sitting on the bench during the game. All team members were lined up on the sideline standing shoulder to shoulder as a very close group. The group was far from quiet and was often encouraging teammates and celebrating their individual and team successes chanting, “nice work Pilgrims!” When athletes came off the field, the coach put her arm around their shoulder and talked with them side-by-side.

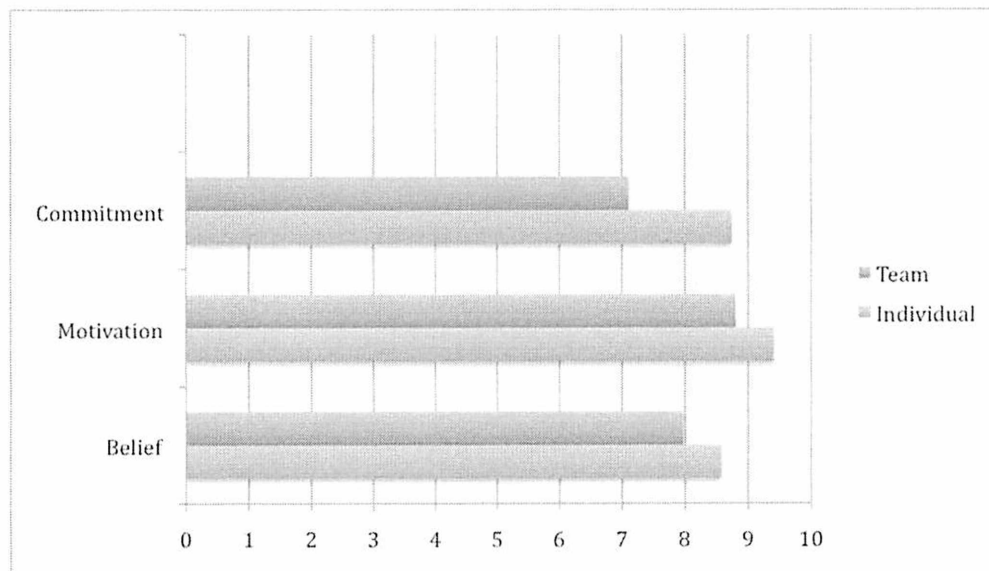
Based on these separate observations from the very first game to the last contest of the season, the researcher noticed distinct differences in communication and relations between players and coaches. Nonverbal messages between all participants were in positive tones and they were focused and energized throughout the entire contest regardless of adversity. The team appeared to recognize when an athlete doubted herself or needed picking up and responded by taking care of it with positive responses. By observing team interaction from beginning to end, the researcher was able to design relevant survey and extended response questions for the participants.

Athlete Survey

The principle behind conducting a survey for the athletes was to gauge all of the necessary elements to achieve team cohesion. The intent of the researcher was to explore self-efficacy beliefs, team efficacy belief, individual commitment, team commitment, individual motivation, and team motivation. Of the 17 survey questions (Appendix B), six were directed toward self-efficacy and team efficacy belief, six were aimed at individual and team motivation, and the remaining five were intended

to study individual and team commitment. Further analysis of the general elements, including player quotes, will be discussed in the following sections.

Table 4.1 Mean Scores Between Team and Individual in Team, Motivation, and Belief



Based on the results of the survey, the individual commitment, motivation, and belief was higher than what each individual thought of team attainment of commitment, motivation, and belief. The results of the 2008 team reflect Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy. Bandura (1997) observed:

Perceived self-efficacy is a strong and consistent predictor of individual athletic performance... As a general rule, compared with persons who doubt their capabilities, those exhibiting high self-efficacy work harder, persist in the task longer, and achieve at a higher level, (p. 20)

While each individual thought that they were achieving at a higher level than their team, it acknowledges the path to collective self-efficacy to be true. In order for a team to achieve collective self-efficacy, the athletes must first achieve self-efficacy. Based on these results the athletes had a high self-efficacy of their individual abilities.

Athlete Extended Response

The purpose of the extended response portion of athlete participation was to dig deeper into the explanation of commitment, motivation, and belief of each athlete individually. These questions allowed the researcher to gain meaning on the development of team cohesion based on their responses. The impact of previous success with the program subsequently influenced player motivation, commitment and belief in continued achievement of the program.

Determining the level of motivation for each athlete consisted of a two-part question: How important was success for you and what helped motivate you this season? All 17 athletes first responded with “very” and elaborated with comments such as “I want to go out with a bang” and “I want to win The CCC, but I mostly want it for the seniors”. Other comments such as “It is what we work so hard for” and “I love winning”. Although, they all shared the same desire for success, they were individually motivated for different reasons. Six of the 17 athletes were motivated for the sole reason of “winning another TCCC”. Other responses included “the high expectations” and “level of success of the program.” However, some athletes were simply inspired by “their teammates.”

The second component of the extended response dealt with commitment level of teammates. According to Jeff Janssen's Championship Team Building model (1999), “the secret to enlisting your team’s commitment lies with one word- involvement. The best way to enlist your player’s commitment is to involve them as much as possible in the team mission process” (p. 55). It is important to recognize championship teams have a majority of their members who are both compliant and

committed to the team mission process. It is also relevant to note three players were removed from the team prior to the end of the season for their resistance to buy into the team mission. The team was asked how they handled it when others did not seem as committed as they were. Many responses came in the form of emotions such as: “frustrated, upset, betrayed, angry, annoyed, disappointed, and unappreciated”. The response from all 17 athletes comprised of feelings of dissatisfaction with those who failed to remain committed to the team.

There are different degrees of commitment. Commitment level of team members also involve qualities such as making ethical decisions, acting with a conscience, finding balance between school, field hockey, and social life and situations distracting them from staying the course of the mission. When asked about making ethical decisions, 10 of the 17 responses pertained to “following team rules”. Others involved “eating healthy” and “stop thinking about myself and think about what’s best for the team”. Additionally, the athletes were asked to describe how they felt when their teammates acted without a conscience and 15 of the 17 answers were either described as “violated, appalled, or hurt.” Of the remaining two answers, one was left blank, and the other replied, “It didn’t bother me”. Those players who were resistant to commitment are identified as reluctant. According to Janssen (1999), “the player is hesitant, disinterested or sometimes afraid to commit to the team goal. These are the players who usually do enough to get by when prodded, but cut corners when they think they can get away with it” (p. 59). Acting ethically identifies the level of accountability and ownership each athlete takes in following the team mission, therefore classifying their level of commitment.

Collegiate student athletes make various levels of commitment to their sport and team when they are forced to be responsible for school, become a team member, and face social pressures. The athletes were asked how they were able to find a balance between school, field hockey, and social life in order to remain committed to the team mission. While the majority of comments noted school came first, five of the athletes also responded describing their lack of social life. Comments about this phenomenon included: "It is really difficult, don't have a social life," and "Priorities are academics and sports. Social life takes a back burner." It is important to note the coach implemented a mandatory study hall for the team requiring them to spend ten hours in the library per week. In a similar season-long study conducted by Steglin (2003), an athlete responded to the expectation and demands of study hall as: "Unfair. I feel like some of the people on our team, they have like three or four study halls or whatever. I know it sounds like I'm exaggerating, but they have their whole day occupied" (p. 43). Although academics are not directly related to team cohesion, they do play a role in team commitment and adherence to team rules. The academic expectations of the New England College field hockey program were clearly a priority for each athlete and one that they remained committed to. The athletes mentioned traits helping them maintain balance, including: "keeping my focus, set times for study, experience, time management, and dropping social life." Each athlete recognized field hockey was not the only ingredient to her commitment in the program. Individually, they had their own way of adhering to the program expectations by maintaining a healthy balance throughout.

The last element explored using the athlete extended responses involved belief in success. Belief in success contains three key ingredients: the individual, the captains or leaders, and the coach. The athletes were first asked if they reached their goals for the season. Fourteen of the 17 athletes responded with yes. Those who answered “no” all shared the same reason for not accomplishing their goals as “injury”. In Dr. Aynsley Smith’s *Power Play Mental Toughness* (1999) book she discusses the mentality of an athlete:

The fear of being replaced on the team is extremely threatening when one considers the hard work and discipline that earned the player a position on the team in the first place. No matter the level of participation, the consequences of injury are that players face a loss of control and see themselves as unable or unlikely to meet their season's goals, (p. 138)

The effects of an injury often go beyond the physical pain by causing emotional distress and will often feel left out of team success therefore taking away their individual belief in success.

Athletes often rely on external sources to gain confidence. The researcher asked the athletes how they were able to gain self-confidence. Each answer was unique to the individual: (a) doing things the way Coach wanted it done; (b) by other teammates; (c) lost it when I sprained my ankle; (d) by other teammates believing in me; (e) self-talk; (f) my friends; (g) by knowing I did something right when Coach and the upperclassmen saying something to me; (h) putting myself out there, just being me; (i) by gaining recognition, people said they looked up to me; (j) experience and self-recognition that you do have talent; (k) worked on my skills; (l) performing well helped me gain confidence; (m) by believing in myself and reminding myself that I could do well; (n) worked hard both in school and field hockey and it paid off; (o)

being part of a team; (o) when Coach and teammates tell me I do a good job; (p) my parents. Dr. Aynsley Smith (1999) points out, "Confidence is the basic belief or trust which one has in oneself. Thus, sport confidence pertains to an athlete's confidence in his or her ability to achieve in a given sport" (p. 88). While each athlete gained belief in various ways, they were able to recognize what specifically helped them achieve and maintain self-confidence. Additionally, the researcher asked each athlete if they felt it was important to help their teammates build confidence. Each athlete responded, "yes" and a few added: "talk to everyone with positive energy" and "you have to be confident to play well and obtain goals." Last, the athletes were asked what helped them gain confidence in their teammates' ability to succeed. Again, they all provided distinctive answers: (a) all positive thoughts and energy; (b) when I saw how hard people worked and how good they played; (c) As soon as we started scoring goals and winning; (d) knowing that everyone cared about the team; (e) by watching everything come together; (f) giving a teammate a chance to demonstrate their ability (g) when we kept winning; (h) having teammates push each other; (i) helping them grow; (j) people receiving honors; (k) freshman stepping up and proving their abilities; (l) working with them; (m) seeing them grow as players and getting so much better; (n) when they took chances and realized that failing helped them improve in the long run; (o) working together; (p) when they gained confidence and showed improvement; (q) cheering them up. While each athlete recognized confidence in their teammates, they all found it differently. On an individual level they all believed in each other's ability to be successful.

The second key to belief in success lies within the captains or team leaders. Without leadership, teams are unable to get through obstacles successfully and often creating more controversy and conflict. In Jeff Janssen's *Championship Team Building* (1999), the key to success is “looking for the natural leaders on your team, or the people who your other players tend to listen to and respect” (p. 105). The researcher asked the athletes whether the captains lead with the level of expectations they had for a team leader. The athletes responded with “yes” and one added: “they did and showed good leadership skills and never gave up on the team. They showed us how to play and what to expect.” Another added, “Perfect examples of what captains should be and were very devoted and respectful.” Effective leadership is often displayed through work ethic, attitude, and commitment. University of Arizona Softball Coach Mike Candrea contributes success to, “having great senior leadership... it’s really the seniors’ team because they are the ones who the rest of the players, especially freshmen, look up to when setting standards” (Janssen, 1999, p. 105). The leadership of the captains in the New England College field hockey program was identified as positive among all members of the team, thus playing a role in team success.

Successful leadership starts with the coach and is the most important component to belief in success. In Janssen’s *Championship Model* (1999), Pat Williams adds:

If you want to build an atmosphere in which everybody pulls together to win, then you, as a leader have to recognize that it all starts with you. It starts with your attitude, your commitment, your caring, your passion for excellence, your dedication to winning. It starts with the example you set. It starts with the way you treat and relate to your players. (p. 154)

In the final section of the athlete extended response, the researcher asked the athletes how important the role of the coach played in the development of team cohesion. All 17 athletes began their response with “Very”. One athlete added, “Coach is awesome, we would not have made it this far without her.” Another added, “She kept us together and helped everyone stay focused.” It is also important to note all 17 added features she added to team success with the most common answer in some form of “she believed in us” or “she would not let us fail.” While it is clear the coach provided belief in success for the team and each individual it is also important to recognize she was effective in developing the mental and group skills necessary to be an successful team.

Interview with Coach

The purpose of the interview with coach was to gain her insight on the development of team cohesion and the evolution of success for the 2008 playing season. The researcher chose to explore how the coach felt the commitment level was for her team, how she was able to motivate her players, and the belief she had in them as a team. The researcher asked the coach to describe how each player identified with their roles on the team. The coach responded:

Most of them did identify and accept their roles. I change the starting line-up. I play people based on what they are able to do. Just because you are a senior doesn't mean you play. It is if you are getting the job done, you get to play. People understood that hard work and results get you playing time. I try to communicate to everyone that sometimes you might be struggling and you just don't have it so you might not be the first person off the bench that day, but maybe you get it together two days later so you do become the first person off the bench. I think communication is critical. Because they all understand my philosophy, they understand their roles.

For the players to accept their roles the coach relied upon consistent communication to each player on what the expectations were. In Janssen's Championship Model (1999), Michael Jordan points out:

When we started winning championships, there was an understanding among all twelve players about what our roles were. We knew our responsibilities and we knew our capabilities. Those were the kinds of things we had to understand and accept if we were going to win championships. (p. 95)

The coach of the New England College field hockey program has created a culture designed for each player to accept and understand her role in order for the program to achieve success.

Commitment to the program proved to be an enormous factor to team success.

The coach identified a few problems with players adapting to expectations and the ownership of commitment to the program. It is important to note the researcher conducted the interview with the coach following the athlete participation in the extended response. Therefore, the researcher was aware of mid-season conflicts among team members. The researcher asked the coach how the team handled the lack of commitment some players had for the program:

A couple of individuals caused conflict on the team. One was a junior. Team rules weren't for her and she had a lack of respect for team members and me. I had a meeting with her and the captains and suspended her for a game for breaking team rules. Then, she had more issues later on and we suspended her and she quit. Some members of the team went to the captains and the captains came to me. Another issue was a player who thought she should have been playing more. We told her that the attitude was unacceptable, not what we expected, we met with her several times, and it just never got any better. I ended up removing her from the team.

The researcher followed up with asking the coach how the team responded to these conflicts and she responded, "The team felt strong because they didn't have any

distractions after these people were removed. Sometimes it can tear you apart and other times it can help. It ended up being gone and we were much better for it.”

Going through the conflicts were noticeably exhausting for both the coach and

players; however, both the coach and players contribute the end result of success to their ability to successfully work through the issues.

Motivation plays an important role in team success. When athletes strive to be the best there is a reflection in their training and habits. Cox (1999) points out motivation comes in many forms and can be both internal and external (p. 16).

Regardless, the desire to find success comes from somewhere. Based on the history of success in the program, much of the team’s inspiration to succeed was both a

combination of internal and external motivation. The researcher asked the coach to describe how motivated the team was to succeed:

The returners were very motivated to succeed because they had won three, two, and one championships. They wanted to win it again for the seniors. There is pressure. There are expectations to win. We win. This year, not everyone realized we were not going to win a conference championship this year because we were young. The mentality was, 'Damn, we need to get that championship for these seniors.' The freshmen still don’t quite get it, because they had never done it. They had not had that success in their high school programs so they didn’t quite get what it’s all about.

The team was compelled to win a championship because they understood the history of the program. It was obvious that the coach felt the mountain was a much higher climb for this year’s team.

Belief in success played a critical component on both an individual level and team level for the team. In order for the team to build confidence in their ability, the coach felt it was important to treat each individual and situation differently. She

stressed the importance of “treating each player differently” She added, “I talk a lot with them about what they are good at. A lot of it, I will say, this is what the other team does, but let’s worry about what we do.” The message relayed to the team was always in a confident and assuring tone thus allowing them to believe they were good at what they were doing. The researcher also asked the coach to look back at the championship game at half-time and recall the message she conveyed to her team. She stressed the message she sent to her team was:

We play a better finesse game. So, I remember standing up at halftime, so we talked about what we needed to do. I talked about how we needed to attack more, get the ball to our leading scorer more, and we talked about strategy things. Then, I talked about what we are good at. We have better ball control. Focus on your strengths. Then, we talk about how we have been here before. We can do it. We know how to win. We know how to win championships. We’ve done it. There’s a sense of, we’ve been here a lot, we know how to do it. We optimize everything we have got. We’ve won championships.

The coach was clear in her message she believed in their ability to accomplish the goal and they have every reason to believe the same result was attainable.

Consistency and repetition in her message was very clear to the researcher.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to study the development of team cohesion and the role it plays in successful performance. The results showed the emergence of several factors that influenced cohesion experienced by team and its members. Based on the survey and extended response with the athletes, along with the interview of the coach, the identity of the team changed over the course of the season. It was noted by both the athletes and coach that team conflict in the middle of the season did arise. The timing of team conflict and the ability of the team to rise above select

individuals' choice to deviate appeared to influence the team positively. The eventual loss of these same team members emerged as a boost of strength to team moral.

The results of the present study suggest similarities and additions to existing research. Few studies have assessed team cohesion across the duration of a playing season. The present study strengthens current literature with the assessment of this phenomenon utilizing Jeff Janssen's Championship Team Building Model.

Additionally, the influence of previous success did influence efficacy beliefs among athletes and coaches. The results support Bandura's theory of efficacy (1997) based on the four elements in the development of efficacy: Successful performance, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. The team was influenced with successful performance because history of the program had proven experience with achievement. The individual athletes had vicarious experience through their coach teaching skills (*i.e.*, ball handling, passing, and defensive positioning). Bandura suggests vicarious experience occurs "When the instructor assists the subject in successfully performing the task" (p. 20). Next the team experienced verbal persuasion by encouragement from their coach and teammates. Last, in Bandura's model they experienced emotional arousal with the occurrence of psychological encouragement.

Summary

The results of this study highlight the essential elements in the development of team cohesion. Specifically, the importance of commitment, motivation, and belief in success were of significant importance. Through data collection the team observed the importance of individual commitment in achieving team success. The athletes

identified several key factors that motivated them to achieve success in their extended responses. The coach expressed the importance of staying committed to team rules and expectations. Furthermore, the coach conveyed the importance of her athletes understanding their roles on the team, e.g., starters, non-starters, offensive players, defensive players. Most importantly, both the athletes and the coach believed in their ability to succeed in large part due to past success.

The commitment level of players was noticeably different from beginning of season to end based on the athletes' responses, the interview with the coach, and the observation of the researcher. The athletes were undoubtedly committed to the team demonstrated by showing up for practice and fulfilling the expectations of hard work from beginning to end. However, a few athletes struggled in the early part of the season with following team rules and expectations off the field, e.g., no late-hours socializing, etc. The coach of the NBA Miami Heat once noted, "There are only two options regarding commitment. You're either IN or you're OUT. There's no such thing as life in-between" (Riley, 1993, p. 71). The coach and the athletes recognized commitment and adherence to team rules were an essential component to success. Once the issues were successfully overcome, the coach observed that the team belief in commitment was displayed/expressed in their actions both on and off the field. One player even recognized that she was "proud of how the team reacted" when asked about dealing with uncommitted players. From beginning to end, it was obvious to the researcher that the coach and athletes were committed, even when significant self-sacrifice is involved, to doing what it takes to accomplish their ultimate goal of winning a league championship.

The historical success of the program winning championships was the elemental force of motivation for both the coach and athletes. Each player discussed their desire to “win the TCCC championship” in some form of answer within their participation of the extended response. The coach conveyed how doubtful she and the upperclassmen were at the beginning of the season in their ability to win another championship. The coach observed everyone recognized the team “was young.” The coach also noted, “We started with small goals week-by-week in order to prevent disappointment.” As the team started achieving small goals, with each win, the researcher observed the team became to, collectively, recognize its potential to win a league championship. In an interview, the coach pointed out the players who started developing a mentality of “good at doing damn, we gotta get that championship for these seniors.” When the team started winning games and gaining confidence in their ability, they were increasingly motivated to “get that championship.”

Naturally, in this field hockey program, there is confidence the team will be successful due to the historical success of the program. As noted above, the returning players and coach were hesitant to believe the team would win a championship this year based on youth and inexperience in the program. The coach admitted to the researcher that she was “worried about how young” the team was and also noted when the team showed up for pre-season she thought, “oh dear, we look bad.” Interestingly, Jeff Janssen (2002) observes, “In talking with athletes, we have found that a significant number of them base their confidence largely on how much they perceive their coach is confident in them” (p. 141). The coach relayed that she talks “a lot with them about what they are good at doing.” As the season went along, the

coach became more confident in the team's ability to succeed noting "we kept over-achieving." Thus, the athletes started feeling the same. The researcher observed in the beginning of the season the team was quiet and reserved and the coach stood further down the sideline from her team. However, in the end of the season, the team was much more vocal during games and the coach was standing much closer to her team on the sidelines. In the end, reality showed the team sitting in the face of success as their coach pointed out during half-time of the championship game, "We know how to win championships. We've done it." In the huddle, many players added, "we can do this." In the end, the team believed they could win a championship and they did.

The development of cohesion of this field hockey team was based on commitment, motivation, and belief in success. The players needed to feel that their teammates were committed. The team was largely motivated by historical success of the program winning league championships. Lastly, the team developed a sense of belief they could achieve their desired result - a league championship.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary and Conclusions

The primary purpose of the present study was to document the development and preservation of team cohesion within a college field hockey team. During the process, the observation of changes in team behavior (e.g., team cohesion, commitment, motivation, and belief) throughout the course of the season was of primary importance. The results showed the emergence of several factors that influenced cohesion experienced by the team and its members. The participants perceived commitment to team rules by all members, positive leadership from captains, and influence of their coach to strongly impact the success of their season. What follows is a discussion of the educational implications based on the results and recommendations for future research.

Educational Implications

The present study has important implications for teams and coaches it shows three factors significantly impacting the development of cohesion. Based on the findings of the current study, several avenues for applied discussion can emerge. Specifically for coaches, the study gives insight into the various factors influencing the development of cohesion within a team and the multiple elements assisting its preservation. By understanding the components influencing a team's cohesion, coaches may facilitate the development process to create successful performance. The culminations of these results can aide coaches in fielding potentially successful teams.

A coach's leadership has impact on a team's success based on their commitment, consistency, care for their athletes, and ability to build confidence (Janssen, 2002, p. 2). Elevated belief in teammates can impact group aspiration to succeed. The present study offers the following suggestions for the preservation of team cohesion: commitment to team rules, consistency of the coach's expectations, motivation to perform, and communication between athletes and their coaches.

Ability of teams to recover from negative actions of teammates will influence the success of a season. It is impossible to eliminate friction, thus the solution is to manage conflict effectively (Janssen, 2002, p. 123). The route coaches and teams take in resolving conflict dictates the direction in which the season will go. When the goal of the team is compromised due to actions of others successful leadership is able to overcome the adversity.

The relationship between leadership and team behaviors played an important role in the development of cohesion. The results of the current study showed commitment to team rules can preserve cohesion and leadership (captains and coaches) play a large role adhering to the policy. It also appears that cohesion is fostered by a coach who is strong in training and instruction, very clear in communication, supports her athletes on and off the field, and consistently giving positive feedback to her athletes.

The interaction between athletes and their coaches in the present study is based on clear communication of expectations, goals, and feedback. The results showed each player understood their role within the program and also felt they could talk to their coach about anything. The athletes felt the coach was very informative

and helpful in both their confidence building and game strategy. Further the athletes felt the messages being sent were very direct, consistent, and positive.

In a championship program there is motivation to remain committed to team goals and perform. The current study revealed that the individual and team commitment inspired team members to accomplish set goals. The players have a clear understanding of how their individual choices and decision influence the collective psyche and success of the team (Janssen, 2002, p. 14). The players in this program had goals and dreams of winning a forth straight championship and were motivated to do so based on the feeling they experienced from previous success.

The present study proved intriguing based on the historical success of the program. In some form, each player expressed an extreme desire to win “another TCCC Championship”. Although upperclassmen had already experienced the emotion of a championship and desired more, the freshman had heard stories and sought the same feeling.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although the current findings were found in a program that has a history of proven success, examination of these relationships in other settings where programs have struggled or in programs who typically fall in the middle might be helpful. To develop a more in depth study, one might note the disparity from three types of programs (losing, average, and winning) and compare the difference. Future research might also note the difference between male and female athletic teams and their development of team cohesion. In the present study, factors such as commitment to team rules, motivation from coaches and teammates, and belief in each other all

significantly impacted team efficacy. However, these behaviors might factor differently for a male athletic team. Additionally, one might consider studying more in depth the relationship between player and coach and how that affects team affiliation. Consequently, future research could examine the trajectory of cohesion over time. The current study measured cohesion only at the end of the season while the team was experiencing success. It is recommended that future studies measure cohesion at multiple time periods throughout the season to determine at which point changes in cohesion occur and what factors change based on time period in the season.

Conclusion

The present study identified factors that influence a successful season. The results of the study showed commitment, motivation and belief in success were key ingredients to the development and maintenance of team cohesion. The findings suggest history of program success, commitment to team rules, and leadership proved to be critical components in team cohesion.

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

A Study of One Season's Impact on Team Cohesion

You are invited to be in a research study of team cohesion among your team. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a member of the New England College Field Hockey team. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Jackie MacMillan (University of Minnesota-Duluth)

Background Information

The purpose of this study is to study how a competitive team's success is linked to collective efficacy.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Student Athletes: To complete an interview and survey at the end of the season and following the end of the season.

Coaching Staff and Support Staff: To complete an interview and survey three times over the course of the year (Pre-Season, Mid-Season, Post-Season).

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

This study has no known risk associated.

The benefits to participation are: There are no benefits to this study.

Compensation:

You will receive payment: You will receive a 2008 Field Hockey highlight video for participating in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. If taping during interview occurs only the researcher will have access. After study is completed, tapes will be destroyed.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota-Duluth. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time with out affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researchers conducting this study are: Jackie MacMillan. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact me at Lee Clement Ice Arena, (603)-428-2406, jmacmillan@nec.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

Post-Season Student-Athlete Survey and Interview Questions

Protocol: Each survey is labeled with a number at the top. When researcher leaves the room, please take a survey/interview sheet and fill out that accurately reflects your feelings toward this season. After completion of survey, put into envelope. Researcher will wait outside until all surveys are completed.

Please Circle: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being low, 10 being high):

How do you feel your level of success was in the TCCC?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do you feel you achieved your expectations of this year's season?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How do you feel the freshmen contributed to the success of this year's team (upperclassmen only)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How do you feel the returning players performed this season?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What is the level of team cohesion you feel your team is at?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How close did your team remain over the course of the season?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How do you rate the level of team cohesion at the end of the season?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What was your commitment to fitness over the course of the season?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What was your commitment to team rules?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What was your motivation to succeed?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do you feel you prepared for games mentally?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How was your communication among team members?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How is your interpersonal relationship among team members?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How do you think your teammates would rate your level of commitment this season?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How do you think your coach might rate your commitment this season?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What was your commitment to nutrition?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How do you feel your teammates were committed to nutrition?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Interview Questions (Your anonymity will be protected since you are the only one that identifies your participant identification number):

What helped motivate you this season?

How important was success for you?

How did you handle it when others did not seem as committed as you were?

Did you feel you reached your goals this season? If so, how? If not, why?

Did the captains lead with the level of expectation you had for them? Explain.

What kinds of ethical decisions did you make over the course of the season?

How did you feel when your teammates acted without a conscience? Describe situation if applicable.

What are some pieces of advice you might give to next year's incoming freshman that maybe you did not have?

How did you find balance between school, field hockey, and social life?

What are some things did to create balance this year?

How did you gain confidence in yourself? Did you find it important to help your teammates build confidence? If so, how do you help them?

Why might some of your teammates have lacked confidence this season?

What helped you gain confidence in your teammate's ability to succeed?

What situations may have distracted or frustrated you and your teammates over the season?

How important was team chemistry to the success of your season?

How important of a role did your coach play in team cohesion?

What types of things did your coach do to help the team achieve success?

What things do you feel your coach could do better to help the team achieve success?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE COACH

1. How committed was this year's team to succeed?
2. How did each player identify with their given roles?
3. What motivated this year's team to succeed?
4. Was there any conflict this year? Can you describe how you and the team responded to it?
5. Do you feel the team maintained their off the field expectations?
6. How important was team nutrition to the outcome of your season?
7. What was the level of commitment for the team members during practice?
8. What was the level of commitment for the team off the field?
9. How did your captains perform their role?
10. How do you personally help your team build confidence?
11. Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently?
12. In your championship game, what did you say to the team at half-time?
13. As a coach, is this one of your sweeter championships, because you weren't expecting to do it?

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